

# The Horse in Indo-Iranian Mythology

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With focus on the mythology of the horse, the rituals in which it is involved, and the philological study of the texts (p. 13), Philippe Swennen investigates, comparing and contrasting, the physical description of the (sacred) horse in the ancient Indic and Iranian literature, the *Vedas* and the *Avesta* (part 1) and its role in Indian and Iranian ritual (part 2) and myth (part 3), thus also providing a starting point for further study of how a common heritage was modified in the two cultures (p. vii). The arguments are based mainly on the ancient texts, but later descriptions are also adduced as support, for instance, the Classical authors writing about Persia (pt. 1, chap. 2 B and E). A large number of relevant Old Indic and (mostly Young) Avestan texts (notably, *Yāšt* 8 to *Tištīria* = *Sirius*) with detailed, mainly philological, commentaries are included as an appendix (pp. 301–98). There is a useful summary in English.

This is the first major comparative study of mythological narratives in the *Vedas* and the *Avestas* since E. Benveniste and L. Renou's *Vṛtra et Vərəθraγna. Étude de mythologie Indo-Iranienne* from 1934. It is an impressive work, both in its size and for the breadth of the textual material it covers. It is not easy to read, however, mainly because of Swennen's baroque and often allusive prose,<sup>1</sup> which makes for slow reading (one reason why this review has been long in the making).

The book suffers to some extent from being, it seems, a reworking of a dissertation (there are a few references to "thèse"), updated somewhat hurriedly, perhaps, for publication;<sup>2</sup> although published in 2004, it appears to have gone to press shortly after the dissertation was defended in July 2000 (the bibliography stops at 1999, with the exception of three articles by the author published between 2000 and 2002).<sup>3</sup> This has resulted in numerous repetitions, with duplicating sections apparently representing different stages of the author's thinking. Internal cross-references are scarce, being limited, especially in the second half of the book, to a "plus haut." As the indexes are also rather short, it is often difficult to find things. It is sad that academia affects our dwindling field in such a way that young scholars are pressured to publish in a hurry.<sup>4</sup>

This is a review article of: *D'Indra à Tištrya: Portrait et évolution du cheval sacré dans les mythes indo-iraniens anciens*. By PHILIPPE SWENNEN. Publications de l'institut de civilisation indienne. Série in-8°, fascicule 71. Paris: COLLÈGE DE FRANCE, 2004. Pp. xii + 424.

1. Seeming to aim for variation and redundancy, rather than clarity. Translations are also inconsistent; in §88, Avestan *vaza-* is rendered in three different ways: "véhiculent," "tirent," and "transportent."

2. Swennen earned a doctorate from the Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli in July 2000 with the dissertation "Le rôle du cheval dans la mythologie indo-iranienne ancienne," and before that a *licence* from the University of Liège from 1993 with a final paper on "Le sacrifice du cheval dans la poésie épique de l'Inde."

3. Some cross-references apparently belong to an earlier division of the book; thus, 2.2.4c (p. 30) = chapter 2, section A, §12c; "point 3.2.3" (p. 140) refers to chapter 3 §75 and "point 1.1" to chapter 1 §3. Note also the discrepancies between chapter headings and running heads in chapter 15 (see below). In the table of contents, chap. 2 should have been subdivided into A–E and chap. 14 into A–F (E is labeled D).

4. There are a fair number of typos; some of the most disconcerting to non-Iranists will be the frequent relapse from the font with diacritics into the standard font, resulting in omissions of diacritics in Avestan words, as well as  $\beta$  for  $\beta$ ,  $\mu$  for  $\xi$ , and  $\delta$  for  $\bar{\delta}$ .

Despite this criticism, it is a rewarding book, both for the source material Swennen discusses and for his conclusions and hypotheses, which are always informative, often thought-provoking, sometimes inspiring.

The goal of the book is to reaffirm Indra's position in the Indo-Iranian pantheon by assuming that he disappeared from the Avestan pantheon (of good gods) as a result of Zarathustra's reform, while his memory survived in the proper name \*Zariaspa found at Persepolis, which matches Indra's epithet *hāryaśva* (§298).<sup>5</sup> Thus, although not stated explicitly in the later chapters of the book, one of the two principal links in Swennen's chain of evidence is the historicity of Zarathustra and his reform.<sup>6</sup> The other is his conviction that exclusive epithets are old and immutable (§§297–98), which implies that Zariaspa can only have been an epithet of Indra (§356).

Indra survived, as it were, in the *Avesta* in the white stallion, the form taken on by Tištriia, the deity of the star Sirius. Among the many pieces of evidence for this are the identical formulas *aiβi + BHŪ aojā* in *Yašt* 8.22 to Tištriia and *abhi + ā + BHŪ . . . ójasā* in *Rigveda* 2.22.2a to Indra (first mentioned §§2–3).<sup>7</sup> The seasonal combat between Tištriia and Apaoša took the place of the cosmic one between Indra and Vṛtra, on the one hand, in order to illustrate [Zarathustra's] new moral dualism prevalent in the Avestan religion; on the other hand, in order to integrate the now seasonal myth in a cosmic conflict dominated by Ahura Mazdā and the Evil Spirit (§372). To establish this thesis, Swennen takes us on a very long journey through Vedic, Avestan, and Greek texts.

The introduction contains a critical survey of earlier, especially Indological, literature, an outline of methodology, and a review of studies of the horse in Vedic literature. In chapter 1 of the first part, Swennen studies the gender of the horse and, in chapter 2, its color according to the Avestan (A), Achaemenid (B), and Vedic (C) evidence. In section B, he discusses the various descriptions by Herodotus and Xenophon of the horses pulling the chariot of the sun. The conclusions of this survey (D): several myths on both sides involve a white horse, an agreement that points to its being an Indo-Iranian divinity, inherited from Indo-European; their rituals, however, as far as they are known, are dissimilar, other than the custom of using white horses for the chariots of the gods and the kings (§38).

Chapter 3 continues with discussions of the two common Vedic equine epithets *vājīn-* and *árvan-/árvant-*, preceded by an inventory of formulas and poetic references to horses:

5. The proper name *zariaspa* (in Elamite script) is found once in a Persepolis tablet. Swennen does not mention that this is not the genuinely Old Persian form: Indo-European \**gh*, Indo-Iranian \**jh*, gives Old Indic *h*, Iranian *z* (in Avestan and most other dialects), but Old Persian *d* (e.g., Av. *azəm*, OPers. *adam* 'I'). The name may therefore (linguistically) be Median or, conceivably, from a lost Avestan text, but not Old Persian as stated, e.g., p. 225.

6. Cf. the English summary (p. xi): "The profound difference between the Vedic and the Avestan worlds is due to two different reforms. The Avesta follows a radical one, chiefly in the Gāthās, less in the young Avesta. The Vedas in the long run reflect the slow waning of Indra, partly replaced by Prajāpati." Thus, Swennen's conclusions will stand or fall with the reality of this reform, assumed long before the *Avesta* was known in the West, but hardly ever called into question and widely appealed to by scholars to explain a variety of features of Old Iranian religion, although there is no evidence for either the reform or the reformer other than what commentators have interpreted into the texts.

7. In fact, *abhy ójasā . . . ābhavad* is clearly parallel with *ā . . . bauuaiti aiβi.aojā*, which shows that, probably, *ā . . . bauua-* = *ā-bhava-*. Swennen follows E. Pirart in taking *aiβi* as postposed preverb + comparative *aojā* for \**aojiā*, which is possible, rather than as a compound. Here and elsewhere (e.g., §352), although not consistently, Swennen edits \**āaīm* for *ādim* and *ā.dim*, (apparently) assuming that *ādim* is a transmission error; but the pronoun *di-* is found in both Young Avestan and Old Persian, which guarantees its antiquity. Moreover, in the summary, p. vii and in §145, he compares Rigvedic *abhībhūtīm ugrām* from *Rigveda* 4.38.9, which, however, has *abhībhūtīm āsōh* (correctly p. 345), while *abhībhūtīm ugrām* is in *Rigveda* 4.38.1d (quoted p. 48 §43, not p. 47, as the index has it).

origin from ocean or water and neighing. Chapter 4 is devoted to descriptions of winged or flying horses. Swennen notes that, while they are compared to birds in the *Rigveda*, in the *Avesta* they have epithets otherwise only applied to stars; the flying horse is identified with the sun in the *Rigveda*, but with the star Tištriia, Sirius, in the *Avesta* (§93). In chapter 5, he discusses horse gear; in chapter 6, the symbolism of the neighing, in which the Rigvedic ritual of the *ašvamedha* is confronted with Herodotus' story about how Darius was chosen king; and, in chapter 7, the horse's mane.

The discussions and conclusions in chapters 1–7 are summed up in chapter 8: the Indo-Iranian horse was a dominant stallion (§145). The bright and dark colors of the horses suggest the alternation of the day and night skies (§146). The white horse was associated with a star and was described as winged and/or flying (§§147–49). It is possible that the Indo-Iranian horse was called *\*aryant*, derived from the root *AR*, which referred to both the rising of the sun and to setting in motion (§151). Swennen then sets out his plan for the second part of the book: to examine the role of this horse in rituals, which reflect the mythical narratives about gods (§§152, 162). Problems include our lack of intimate knowledge about the Indo-Iranian religion, other than the fact that they celebrated the concept of *ṛta*, the harmonious order of the cosmos and the battle between its supporters and opponents (§§153–54). In the *Rigveda* the ruler and organizer of the cosmic order is Indra; in the *Avesta* it is Ahura Mazdā, who, apparently, does not fight his own battles, but delegates them to Tištriia and the fravashis (§155). Indra and Tištriia both liberate the waters by means of celestial horses, and both belong to the nocturnal world (§156). In the ritual, the horse marks the transition from darkness to light, to the rule of a king who ensures the supremacy of the cosmic order (§§160–61). The chapter ends with two questions: how does all this explain the nature of the religious experience of these peoples, and why does the horse play these important roles?

The second part of the book, concerning the role of this horse in the Indo-Iranian rituals, begins with a discussion of processions and parades (chap. 10 A): the descriptions of Vedic and Achaemenid processions permit the conclusion that the ritual parade goes back to Indo-Iranian times (§180). The section concludes with reflections on the dualist nature of the oldest Vedic and Avestan rituals (§203). The second part of this chapter (B) deals with descriptions of royal parades in texts on the *ašvamedha* ceremony in India and by Xenophon and Herodotus for the Achaemenids, compared with the description of Miθra in the Avestan *Yašt* 10.124–27.

Chapter 11 is about horse and chariot races (B) and immolations (C). Swennen wraps up the Indic part of section B (no. 1) by citing the analysis of the ritual given by Heesterman, who concluded “the course of the chariot corresponds to that of the sun, encompassing in its march the whole world.” The characteristic features of the archetypal horse are compatible with Heesterman's description, although the horses participating in the ritual are not described individually and the descriptions of the *vājapeya* decisively therefore do not contribute evidence for the original role of the archetypal horse (§246). He then turns to Iran (B no. 2), bemoaning the fact that ancient Iran is so poor in information about ritual chariot races, which, he suggests, may attest to the radically different, even opposite, religious beliefs separating the Indo- and Irano-Aryans, especially since the chariot course rituals are, presumably, of Indo-European date (§247). Passing on to immolations, Swennen first (C nos. 1–2) studies the *ašvamedha* ritual to determine whether the horse involved corresponds to the picture of the archetypal horse (§257), much of which repeats what was already said in the earlier analysis. The Iranian evidence (no. 3) is from the Young Avestan *yašts*, with their references to massive offerings of sacrificial animals to the deities, and from the Classical authors.

The second part of the book concludes with reflections on the results obtained so far. Although the archetypal Indo-Iranian horse still remains somewhat elusive, at least the comparative method has modified the terms in which the question about the status of Indra is usually posed, moving it from the Vedic period to the Indo-Iranian period (§§295–96). The answer to the question why the *Avesta* has so little to say about the rituals involving horses and chariot races and avoids the poetic formulas associated with them (§296) must be that they disappeared together with the deity with which they were most closely associated, namely Indra, who, Swennen proposes, must have played an important role in Iranian religion down to the historical period, as suggested by the proper name *zariašba* (i.e., \**zari-aspa*), which matches Indra's epithet *hāryašva* (§§297–98).

In the third and last part of the book, on the role of the horse in ancient Indo-Iranian mythology, Swennen therefore examines how the ancient Indo-Iranian rituals to Indra were “re-exploited,” especially in Iran in the hymn to Tištriia (§300). In chapter 14, Swennen examines the mythical horse in the Vedas and its place in the Rigvedic cosmogonic framing myth (as interpreted by Kuiper, Brown, and Schmidt; A), concluding that it is at the point when the god gets ready to liberate the dawns, the waters, and the sun from the mountain fortresses in which they are enclosed that Indra is aided by the horse, whose neighing breaks open the mountain (B). The horse is, in fact, partly identified with Indra (§321). Swennen then returns to the function of the archetypal horse as constituting a “presence between two worlds”—that is, it belongs to both the world of chaos and the world of order (C)—and to its role in opening the roads of the cosmic order (D). The poet's contribution matches that of the horse: he sees the road, and, inspired, he sings the hymn; the pressing of the soma parallels the chariot race and the release (*sarj-*) of the horse (D for E).

Chapter 15 is devoted to the mythical horse in the *Avesta*. It is divided into three parts: a close reading of the text of *Yašt* 8 to Tištriia (A: “Tištar *Yašt*: faits textuels et conséquences”; running head: *Le duel du Tištar Yašt*; pp. 265–67); a discussion of the convergences in the Vedic and Avestan myths (B: “Mythes védiques et avestiques: les convergences”; running head: *Convergences indo-iraniennes*; pp. 268–81); and an unnamed section ([C]; running head: *La geste de Tištrya*; pp. 281–97). Differently from the omnipresent references to the horse in the *Rigveda*, in the *Avesta* such references are in the main confined to a section of the hymn to Tištriia (*Yašt* 8.10–34). There are a number of important differences between the Tištriia myth and the “Vedic world”: 1. Tištriia is not a demiurge and does not contribute, directly or indirectly, to Ahura Mazda's organization of the cosmos; 2. the myth is not a cosmogonic myth but a seasonal one; 3. the horse is exclusively a battle horse (§349).

Swennen then proceeds to catalogue the similarities, which include the following (§350): 1. Both the Vedic and Avestan myths contain a world ocean pre-existing all other waters and, according to the Pahlavi texts, containing all other waters; 2. There is a mountain in the middle of the ocean, whose name indicates it is the source of all rivers; 3. In the middle of the Vourukaša Sea, there is a tree, on which perches the bird Saēna, which can be compared with the Vedic *śyenā*, connected with the ocean and the *soma*; 4. In the Vedic myth Indra's action (assisted by the horse) cracks open the mountain, anchors it at the bottom of the ocean, liberates the rivers, and stretches out the terra firma, while in the Iranian myth, as presented in the Pahlavi texts [not in *Yašt* 8], after Ahura Mazda's first victory over the Evil Spirit, he established the earth, from which the mountains grew up with their roots growing down. The sweet waters were gathered, and Tištriia made them rain down, dividing the earth into seven continents. Thus the Vedic and Zoroastrian myths revolve around a battle resulting in the release of the waters.

The discussion that follows is therefore aimed at establishing the genetic relationships between Indra and Tištriia and their respective adversaries, Vṛtra and Apaoša, and the myth of the release of the waters. The indications furnished by Indo-Iranian onomastics [*zariašba*] show that Indra was present in the Indo-Iranian pantheon in a role similar to the one he plays in the *Rigveda*, and it must be the *Avesta* that innovated and set Indra aside (§361). As for *vṛtra*, originally a neuter noun, it was personified and turned into a masculine opponent of Indra (§362). Once Vṛtra had become a true demon, the door to pure cosmic dualism was wide open, and the Avestan speakers fell right into it. With the development of the new ethical dualist vision and the new perception of the cosmic adversary, the neuter concept became obsolete, as well as its secondary personification, which produced a snowball effect: getting rid of *vṛtra* meant getting rid of Indra, and the old dualism was replaced by a different one (§§363–64). It may have been the unpredictability of Indra's personality that [in Zarathustra's reform] disqualified him from incarnating a stable, precise, and predictable spirit (§364). In what one might call the "Avestan revolution," with its ideological break with the past but also with attempts to improve the tradition, the mythical narrative of the release of the waters was maintained in the new ethical cosmic dualism by substituting the white stallion for Indra (§365). Thus, the combat between Indra and Vṛtra was replaced by that between Tištriia and Apaoša (§372, see above).<sup>8</sup>

In the last two paragraphs of this chapter, we return to the function of the sacrifice as gift exchange (discussed earlier in connection with *vājín-*, see §§49, 58, 76). Here, Swennen proposes that Avestan *xʷarənah-* is the equivalent of Rigvedic *vāja-*, the reward requested by humans for their gifts to the deities. The conclusion is based on A. Lubotsky's equation of *xʷarənah-* with Rigvedic *pārīṇas-* in the formula *rāyá pá rīṇasā*, which appears to correspond to Avestan *raiiia xʷarənaṇhaca*.<sup>9</sup> Rigvedic *vāja-* must therefore have replaced *pārīṇas-*, and the *Avesta* is, in this case, the more conservative (§381). The conceptual parallelism between the *xʷarənah-* and the *vāja-* is reflected in the derived epithets: Avestan *xʷarənaṇʰant-*, constantly applied to Tištriia (among others!), is the perfect counterpart of *vājín-* (also applied to many gods, but most closely associated with the horse; §382).<sup>10</sup>

Chapter 16 is an epilogue summing up the main results and stating the author's conviction that the *Avesta* and the *Rigveda* illuminate one other by the answers they give to this fundamental preoccupation: how can man on this earth associate himself, by his sacrifices, with the order installed by the gods? I can only concur with this.

The Annexe contains a number of Rigvedic and Avestan texts with philological remarks (rather than commentaries). I shall comment on a few of these (which does not mean I agree with everything else).

8. Interestingly, in the calendar of the Maga Brāhmaṇas preserved by Varāhamihira (6th century), Indra corresponds to Tir in the Sasanian Zoroastrian calendar, who replaced Tištriia in the Avestan calendar. See A. Panaino, "The Year of the Maga Brāhmaṇas," in *La Persia e l'Asia centrale da Alessandro al X secolo . . . (Roma, 9–12 novembre 1994)* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1996 [publ. 1997]), 576, 581.

9. See A. Lubotsky, "Scythian Elements in Old Iranian," in *Indo-Iranian Languages and Peoples*, ed. Nicholas Sims-Williams (Proceedings of The British Academy, vol. 116; Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press for The British Academy, 2002), 191–95, and my review in *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 16 (2002 [pub. 2007]: 197). See also Swennen's remarks p. 366.

10. The epithet *xʷarənaṇʰant-* is found mainly in two formulas. One is *raēuuant- xʷarənaṇʰant-*, matching *raiiia xʷarənaṇhaca*, the other is *mazdaḍāta- xʷarənaṇʰant- baēšaziia-* "established by Ahura Mazdā, endowed with Fortune, healing." The first is applied to Ahura Mazdā, Tištriia, Vaiiu, the river Haētumañt, and the moon; the second to "(sacred) utterances," the stars Haptōiringa (the Big Dipper); alone, it is applied to the stars (*Yasht* 8.1). It is therefore fairly clear (to me) that it is applied to Tištriia as a star, not as a horse.

p. 363: The discussion around *dāθrai*<sup>11</sup> *āiiaptām* is irrelevant, as the text has *dāθriš āiiaptām* and means: “She gave him then that prize, (she) Arduuī Sūrā Anāhitā, the giver of prizes to the expert (poet-sacrificer) carrying (barsom) together with libations, who sacrifices to (her and) asks (her favors).” The accusative with various agent nouns is fairly common.

p. 363–64. I do not believe that *zī mē* “for . . . to me” is for *\*zimē* ‘throughout winter’, nor that it is an instrumental. The end of the strophe probably means “who has as many armies as nine hundred and a thousand,” with *yejhe* for *yejḥā* and muddled morphology of the numerals, as not uncommonly. Thus, in my opinion, there is no potentially interesting connection here between Yima’s reign and “Anāhitā’s winter.”

p. 372: I disagree with J. Kellens’ characterization, adopted by Swennen (§89), of *vazəmnō* in *raoxšnušuuva vazəmnō* (*Yašt* 8.18) as a “modal auxiliary defining the spatial displacement that results in the completion of the process” (J. Kellens, *Le verbe avestique* [Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1984], 335). It is a participle in apposition, and the clause means “as he comes flying (among the lights),” as also in *Yašt* 14.19 (cited in §90) *ājasaṭ vazəmnō* “came flying.” There is also no 1st singular subjunctive with secondary ending *daḍqm*. The formula *kahmāi* ( . . . ) *azəm* “to whom (shall) I . . . ?” take the ending *-āni* (*-eni*): *upaṇhacaieni* (*Yašt* 5.8, 124), *paiti.daθāni* (*Yašt* 10.109), *baxšāni*, *nijanāni* (*Yašt* 10.110), *apabarāni* (*Yašt* 10.111), and *daḍqm* must simply be wrong for *\*daḍāni* not otherwise attested (for common *daθāni*).

p. 375: The observations on *aipiḍāna-* are interesting. The word survives with the meaning ‘bridle’ in various modern Iranian languages and dialects; see, e.g., G. Morgenstierne, *A New Etymological Vocabulary of Pashto* (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2003), 49, s.v. *mluna*.

p. 379: The *-ca* in *uštātātəmca* (*Yašt* 8.29) coordinates the two clauses, and there is no noun missing. I doubt that *ni-mrao-* means ‘s’écriture’ (as Swennen), ‘exclaims’ (Panaino); Kellens’ ‘appeler de ses vœux’ is probably the closest; perhaps, simply, ‘call down’: “He drives him away . . . and calls down . . .”

p. 380: The root *YUZ* is never applied to the “coups de cœur.” It means ‘be or set in commotion’. In *Yašt* 10.111 it refers to confusion of the thought, in *Yašt* 10.36 to the commotion/confusion of the flanks of the army, in *Yašt* 14.6 to that of the battle lines, and in *Yašt* 13.95 to the lands in commotion that Miθra pacifies.

p. 385 (*Yašt* 10.47): E. Pirart’s idea of impious fravashis does not hold. There just are not any (in the *Avesta*) and certainly not any bloodthirsty ones. At most they are worn and broken-down (*Yašt* 13.105 *auuascastō.frauuašinqm* ‘with broken-down fravashis’).

p. 386: The etymology of *varəniia-*, epithet of *drauuant-* ‘wicked, possessed by the *druj*’, remains unknown. The derivation from *varəna-* ‘choice’(?) is unlikely. More probably, perhaps, the word is related to Pahlavi *waran*, commonly thought to mean ‘greed’, or similar. *Waran* is listed in *Bundahišn* 5.1 as the opponent of *āsn-xrad* ‘the *xrad* one is born with’, together with other demons and their opponents, including *Indar* (Av. *Indra* = *Indra*), opponent of *Ardwahišt* (*aša vahišta* ‘best Order’); *Sāwul* (Av. *Sāuru* = *Śarva*), opponent of *Šahrewar* (*xšaθra vairiia* ‘the well-deserved command’); *Nānghaθ* (Av. *Nāṇhaiθiia* = *Nāsatya*), opponent of *Spandarmad* (the earth); etc.—all of which long ago made me wonder if perhaps *Varuṇa* also made it into the Zoroastrian pandemonium. In *Yasna* 46.3 the *xratu*s of the sacrificers are equated with the ‘bulls of the days’ (*uxšānō asnqm*), which, apparently, pull the chariot of the sun. In the *Rigveda* *Varuṇa* straightens the path for the sun and provides the course of the days (*āhabhyaḥ*; *RV* 7.87.1; cf. *RV* 9.97.30 with both *āhnām* and *krātubhiḥ*). Thus, just as *Indra*, who makes Order, has become the opponent of Order, *Varuṇa*, who provides the paths for the sun and the days, may have become the opponent of those that pull the days across the sky.

p. 390: *Yašt* 13.65: *paoiriḥ* is not ‘the first’ from *paoiriia-* (Skt. *pūrvyā-*), but ‘many’ from *pouruui-* (Skt. *pūrvī-*). — *Yašt* 13.66: *aēšəmna-* is not ‘desirous’ but ‘seeking’.

p. 395: *hixra-* is hardly a hapax, as it is found three times in *Videvdad* 5.14–18. The Pahlavi texts distinguish between *nasā*, dead bodies, and *hixr*, bodily refuse (excrement, nails, hairs).

11. No Avestan word ends in *-ai*. I do not know where Swennen got this form.

The book is an ambitious project. Unfortunately, anybody who undertakes this kind of comprehensive comparative study based on Vedic and Avestan source texts at the level of a Ph.D. dissertation runs the risk of not being sufficiently familiar with the material. I cannot speak to Swennen's familiarity with the Vedic texts, but, as far as the *Avesta* is concerned, he clearly, and understandably, relies on editions of a few texts and not on the entire *Avesta*. Thus, it is not too difficult to find examples of other Avestan texts that either support or contradict Swennen's analyses. Also, since editions are always idiosyncratic, it is important to have studied the *Avesta* on one's own and be well familiar with it. Had he been more familiar with the texts, for instance, he could not have helped but notice the abundant references to chariots and chariot races in the *Old Avesta* and other myths related to his theme in the *Young Avesta*.

#### ON CHARIOTS AND CHARIOT RACES IN THE AVESTA

The terminology of the Gathic chariot race, which is clearly a ritual race, was discussed by H. Humbach in the 1950s and the results incorporated in his edition of the *Gāthās* from 1959,<sup>12</sup> apparently unnoticed by Swennen. Absent from his discussion is also, as far as I can see, reference to K. Hoffmann's 1968 article, in which he discussed the construction *zā-* + locative, meaning 'leave (behind) in (the race for)'.<sup>13</sup> The Old Avestan vocabulary includes harnessing (*ā-YAM*) and yoking (*YUG*), reining and steering (*ham-YAM*, Vedic *sam-YAM*), and turns (*uruuāēsa-*). *Yasna* 50.6 contains the phrase "the chariot horse or charioteer of my tongue" (*hižuūō raiθīm* = Vedic *rathīam* or *rāthiam*). There are others not yet pointed out, notably, the wide stance of the legs (*vidāiti-rānāiā* and variations of the formula) needed to stand firmly on the chariot. That the *daēnās* played a central role in the race is indicated by the application of the verb *VAN* to them, as in *Yasna* 39.2 (past, present, future), and the description of them after the race in *Yasna* 12.9 *āstuiē daēnām māzdaiiasnīm fraspāiaoxāδrām niδā.snaiθišīm* "I present with my praise the *daēnā* of those who sacrifice to Ahura Mazda, throwing off the harness, laying down (her) weapons."

Also not cited is the important passage in *Yasna* 9.26 (discussed by Hoffmann),<sup>14</sup> where Haoma is said "to hold firmly the \*reins (*aiβiδāitiš*) and [chariot?] handles (*grāūs* from \**graβa-*) of the (life-giving) poetic thought (*māθra [spənta]*)" (thus Hoffmann, p. 200, with the comment: "Haoma, dem Ahura Mazda einen Sternengürtel verliehen hat, lenkt den heiligen Spruch wie ein Pferd"). Seeing this passage in conjunction with *Yašt* 13.81, where the life-giving poetic thought has the epithets *aurušō raoxšnō frāδarəsrō*, characteristic of the horse (Swennen is puzzled by this passage, p. 26), and is followed by *huuarəxšaētəm auruuat.aspəm yazamaide* "we sacrifice to the sun with fleet horses," it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the life-giving poetic thought represents the chariot horse of the sun. Moreover, since the life-giving poetic thought in this passage is identified with Ahura Mazda's *uruuan*, it would seem that, similarly, the sacrificers' *uruuans* may also represent the chariot horses of their ritual-mythological chariots. The life-giving poetic thought also plays an important role in the conclusion of the *Videvdad*, which contains the myth of the healing of

12. H. Humbach, *Die Gathas des Zarathustra*, 2 vols. (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1959).

13. K. Hoffmann, "The Avesta Fragment FrD.3," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 11 (1968): 1–10 (= *Aufsätze* I, 221–27). Swennen does not list the individual articles in the bibliography, only the collective *Aufsätze zur Iranistik* (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1975).

14. K. Hoffmann, "Zur awestischen Textkritik: Der Akk. Pl. mask. der *a*-Stämme," in *W. B. Henning Memorial Volume*, ed. M. Boyce and I. Gershevitch (London: Lund Humphries, 1970), 187–200 (= *Aufsätze* I, 274–87).

the world (and Ahura Mazdā) and the release of the sun from the mountain in which it is held (*Videvdad* 21.5, partly cited p. 67).

The image of the “dustless paths” also appears, I believe, in the *Gāthās*: *Yasna* 31.2 *yezī āiš nōi uruuānē aduuā aibi.dərəštā vaḫiiā*, which I tentatively render as “For if, through these (words and actions, they are) not to be \*set in motion, the better (things that are) clearly seen unhidden by the dust (of the road)”; cf. *Rigveda* 1.139.4 *āceti dasrā vy ù nākam ṛṇvatho, yuñjāte vām rathayūjo dīviṣṭiṣv, adhvasmāno dīviṣṭiṣu* “It has appeared, O masters. You (two) open up the sky. Your chariot horses are yoked to the sacrifices of the day unhidden by the dust (of the road).” Thus *aduūā* (rather than an incorrect nominative singular of *aduuan-* ‘road’) can be neuter plural of *aduūah-* ‘dustless’, which may represent the older form of the negated adjective, \**a-dhvas*, changed to *adhvasmān* in analogy with *dhvasmān*.<sup>15</sup> Swennen does not appear to mention the Rigvedic phrases with *dhvasmān* and *adhvasmān*.

The discussion of the Tištriia myth has also overshadowed another important myth belonging to the cosmogonic myth complex, namely that of Sraoša—whose horses have the same epithets as Tištriia and the life-giving poetic thought!—and his opponent Wrath (*aēšma*), who embodies the dark night sky. Wrath’s weapon is a “bloody club,” with which he smashes the world of the living at sundown, its bloodiness probably referring to the red of the sunset, while Sraoša’s is a “daring club,” with which he in turn deals Wrath a “bloody wound,” allowing the sun to rise. Sraoša is mentioned in *Yasna* 44.16, which I interpret rather differently from Kellens-Pirart as implying that the “obstruction-smasher” (*vərəθrēm.jan-*) is, in fact, Sraoša,<sup>16</sup> and in *Yasna* 28.5, which perhaps implies that he is or furnishes a passage way (*gātu-*), or “opens the roads,” for the *ahura*, perhaps the fire/sun.

Finally, note *auruuant-* in *Yasna* 50.7 (not cited): *aī vā yaojā zəuuštīiñg auruuatō / jaiiāiš pərəθuš vahmahiiā yūšmākahiiā / mazdā ašā ugrəñg vohū manəṇhā / yāiš azāθā* “Thus, I shall (now) harness for you the fleetest coursers—broad-(chested)<sup>17</sup> by the victories of (my) hymn to you, O Mazdā, strong by the Order (of my ritual), by (my) good thought, through which (victories/hymns) you all shall take away (the spoils).”<sup>18</sup>

15. Cf. Avestan *aspən* ‘without life-giving strength (*spən*)’ versus *spənta* ‘endowed with life-giving strength’.

16. See P. O. Skjærvø, “Smashing Urine: On *Yasna* 48.10,” in *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context*, ed. M. Stausberg (Numen Book Series; Studies in the History of Religions, vol. 102; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 253–81.

17. In my “The State of Old-Avestan Scholarship” (*JAOS* 117 [1997]: 111) I compare *Rigveda* 3.15.1 to Agni: *vī pájasā prthúnā sósucāno, bādhasva dviṣo rakṣāso āmīvāḥ* “Ever-blazing, with (your) broad chest push away the enemies, the powers of darkness, the illnesses”; and 10.77.3 to the Maruts: *pájasvanto ná virāḥ panasyāvo riśādaso ná máryā abhidyavaḥ* “like (broad-)chested heroes wishing for praise, like triumphant suitors, the heavenly ones.” See H. W. Bailey, *Dictionary of Khotan Saka* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979), 229–30.

18. Cf. Vedic *vājaṃ bharate* ‘takes away the prize’ (*Rigveda* 1.64.13, 2.24.9), Avestan *varətam aza-* ‘carry off as prisoner/booty’, Parthian *ward-āz* (*wrt’y’z*) ‘booty’, and Persian *bar-* ‘win’ (in competition); Greek *phérō* ‘win as prize’, Greek *ágō* ‘carry off’ (as slave/hostage).



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